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ABSTRACT

A self-instructional unit in early reading designed for community college child care students is presented in this paper along with information about the development of the unit. Introductory chapters discuss the controversy about teaching young children to read, the systems approach used in developing the unit, and the steps followed in preparing the unit and administering it to two students. The unit itself, presented in its entirety, includes the rationale for such a unit, unit objectives, a pretest, and a posttest. Discussions and suggestions for related learning activities are then presented for the following topics: advantages and disadvantages claimed for early reading; readiness for reading; the factors of the child's mental age, visual maturity, language development, prior experiences, degree of motivation, social development, visual discrimination, and auditory discrimination; the question of whether preschool children should be taught to read; and methods for teaching young children to read. Pretest and posttest scoring keys and a unit evaluation form are also included. The paper concludes with recommendations for implementing the unit and a bibliography of relevant readings. (GW)

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A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SELF INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT IN EARLY

READING FOR PRESCHOOLERS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
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Roberta L. Noonan

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

by

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Moraine Valley Community College

DR. JUSTINE MANLEY

DU PAGE CLUSTER

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

This practicum develops a self-instructional unit in early reading for pre-schoolers, to be used by students in the Community College Child Care program. Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the unit are made as well as recommendations for its use in non-traditional ways.

B. Problem

The problem was to develop an integrated self-instructional unit with meaningful learning activities to support the self-instructional unit, and to make it a genuine learning experience for students. In order to accomplish this, the learning activities had to reflect the rationale and specific instructional objectives of the unit.

C. Background and Significance

Early reading and its effect on the preschool child has become one of the most controversial topics in the field of early childhood education. Despite enormous experience in nursery school and Head Start programs, there remains a continuing dispute over whether these children should be taught academic skills such as reading and math or whether they should only be prepared for academic subjects through cognitive play and socialization experiences. There is no middle ground on this issue. Experts, well known and well respected in the field, can be found on both sides of the early reading controversy. When discussing the issue professionals quickly lose their objectivity and resort to unsupported arguments designed to appeal

to emotion rather than logic. For some professionals, early reading is a threat; for others it is a valuable addition to the curriculum. Beadle (1971) believes that the ability to read is central to the educational process and at the very core of our culture. The controversies about how to teach and when to teach reading are surrounded by emotionalism rather than reason.

Most specialists in early childhood education are opposed to early reading instruction because the children are not sufficiently mature physically or emotionally and that premature introduction to reading might give rise to permanent antagonism or distaste for the reading process (Schubert, 1972).

A study by Appleton shows that kindergarten children, when given a choice, chose to take part in a reading program and they all succeeded in learning to read (Wilson, 1976).

O. K. Moore (1964), made headlines with his famous talking typewriter that was programmed to teach children as young as two years of age to read. Children exposed to his "Responsive Environment" for two years can usually read at a sixth grade level by the end of first grade, Moore claims.

Verna Hildebrand (1976), states unequivocally that the nursery school and kindergarten teachers should leave the teaching of reading for the group as a whole, to the first grade teacher, who has special visual aids and techniques that the child will find fresh and exciting if they aren't usurped by the nursery school and kindergarten and labored over prematurely.

Glen Doman and Dr. Carl Delacato, while treating brain damaged children discovered that their two, three, and four year old brain injured children could learn to read and do it with enormous excitement and joy (Doman, 1963).

A five year research project conducted cooperatively by the Denver Public Schools and the Colorado State Department of Education focused on the effectiveness of beginning reading instruction in kindergarten. The study showed that beginning reading skills could be taught quite effectively to large numbers of typical kindergarten pupils. A significant finding of the study showed that beginning reading skills could be taught quite effectively to large numbers of typical kindergarten pupils. A significant finding of the study showed that early reading presents no blocks, physical or emotional, to later reading (McKee and Breinski, 1966).

The question, according to Smith (1964), is not whether children can learn to read at an early age. Of course they can learn to read. There is plenty of evidence that young children can learn to read; the question is whether they should be taught to read at an early age.

For the purposes of this study, the following definition from Hildebrand (1976), was used. Reading is making sense out of letters or symbols--not merely pronouncing symbols. To make sense means to comprehend or understand the concepts symbolized by the letters.

This practicum is appropriate to the curriculum development module because it developed a self-instruction unit in early reading and investigated its place in the early childhood curriculum. All of the emphasis on early learning in the past ten years has brought attention to early reading. Community College program coordinators responsible for training child care workers need to examine this issue, in depth, without the emotional histrionics that so often accompany the topic, in order to provide students with a rationale for or against early reading that is solidly based on research and not opinion.

In designing the self-instruction unit, Herrschers (1971), systems approach was used. This approach involves six basic steps: (1) a rationale; (2) specific instructional objectives; (3) preassessment; (4) learning activities; (5) post-assessment; and (6) revision. The rationale established the relevance of the unit to the needs of the students and the purposes of the institution. The objectives determined what the student would be able to do upon completion of the unit that he could not do before. The preassessment determined student readiness for the material that was presented. The learning activities provided the student with multiple concrete experiences that both reinforced and expanded learning. The post-assessment provided measurable evidence of student learning.

The final section of the unit, the revision, was based upon feedback from students who worked through the unit. The purpose of a revision section is to provide a vehicle for the unit to improve.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES

The first task in this practicum was to establish a rationale and objectives for the self instruction unit (Herrscher, 1971).

The second task was to design a pre and post assessment instrument for the unit.

The third task in this practicum was to identify the reasons cited in the literature for or against early reading. Learning activities were incorporated into this and the following task of the unit, to provide practice for the learner.

The fourth task was to identify the criteria of a prereading or early reading program cited in the literature.

The fifth task was to administer the unit to two students.

The final task was to recommend revisions for the unit based on: (1) the interview with the students; (2) a questionnaire that gathered data on the students' attitude toward the unit (Herrscher, 1971).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The first task, the development of a rationale and objectives for the self instructional unit (Herrscher, 1971), produced the following:

RATIONALE

Early reading is a very controversial subject among professionals in the field of Early Childhood Education. Experts well known and well respected in the field, can be found on both sides of the early reading controversy. When discussing the issue the professionals quickly lose their objectivity and resort to unsupported arguments designed to appeal to emotion rather than logic. Some professionals claim that early reading is a threat; for others it is a valuable addition to the curriculum.

Examining this issue, in depth, without the emotional histrionics that so often accompany the topic, will provide you with a rationale for or against early reading that is solidly based on research and your own first hand experience, and not opinion.

This knowledge will enable you, as the teacher, to contribute a great deal to the creative and mental growth of the children who will love and trust you. Parents who place their children in your care during these early, formative years, have a tremendous amount of trust in your knowledge and ability. Children deserve the best possible chance to develop to their maximum potential. They also deserve the most knowledgeable teacher -- you.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- 1) List three objections some professionals have against early reading for preschoolers.
- 2) List three reasons some professionals give in support of early reading for preschoolers.
- 3) List the eight prereading skills generally accepted as necessary for success in reading and comment on the validity of each.
- 4) Cite the results of two studies comparing early readers with children who learned to read in first grade.
- 5) List the criteria of an early reading program.
- 6) Plan a program that meets those needs.

The second task, to design a pre and post test instrument for the unit.

PRE-TEST

- 1) List three objections some professionals have against early reading for preschoolers.
- 2) List three reasons in favor of early reading for preschoolers.
- 3) List three early reading activities suitable for preschoolers.
- 4) Take a position for or against early reading and defend it.

Check your answers on page 27 . If you were correct on questions 1, 2 and 3, see the instructor. If you missed one or more of these questions, work through this unit.

POST TEST

- 1) List three key reasons, cited in the literature, against early reading.
Which of these reasons is supported by research?

- 2) List three key reasons, cited in the literature, in defense of early reading. Which of these reasons is supported by research?

- 3) What criteria must the preschool teacher keep in mind as she plans an early reading program?

- 4) List four activities that you would consider basic to a preschool reading program.

Check your answers against the text material. If you missed any of the questions, review the text material.

The third task, to identify the reasons cited in the literature for or against early reading and the fourth--to identify the criteria of an early reading program--were developed in the main body of the unit as learning activities.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

THE PRO'S AND CON'S OF EARLY READING

Most specialists in early childhood education are opposed to early reading instruction because they claim that young children are not sufficiently mature physically, mentally, or emotionally, and they believe that premature introduction to reading might give rise to permanent antagonism or distaste for the reading process (Schubert, 1972).

At this point in the discussion, the emotional histrionics usually take over and proponents of early reading are accused of pushing children, robbing them of their childhood, damaging their vision, and other insidious forms of child abuse.

Hildebrand (1976), states that nursery school and kindergarten teachers should leave the teaching of reading to the first grade teacher, who has special materials and techniques that the child will find fresh and exciting, provided the child hasn't labored over reading prematurely.

Reading appears to be the only skill viewed by early childhood professionals in such a negative way. Teaching the prereading skills is acceptable, but reading itself is not. These standards do not apply in the area of art, music, motor development, science, math, printing, health, or social science. Teaching or exposing children to sequential skill development activities that lead up to the integration of several subskills into a master skill is considered good practice in all areas except reading.

A study in 1966 of the effectiveness of teaching reading in kindergarten by the Denver Public Schools, shows that reading instruction in the kindergarten resulted in higher levels of reading achievement through grade five when the instruction in grades one through five was adjusted to their needs. The children in the study were exposed to reading instruction for only twenty minutes a day and the rest of the time was spent in the usual kindergarten curriculum. No harmful effects of teaching reading in kindergarten appeared. Visual function was not impaired. No evidence appeared that personality was adversely affected. And no more children in the experimental group were retarded in reading than in the control group (Tinker 1972).

View the filmstrip: LB 1573.R42 "Reading, A Way to Begin" in the Learning Resource Center.

Write a short paper reacting to the attitudes expressed in the filmstrip regarding early reading.

WHEN IS THE CHILD READY TO READ

Reading rediness has been defined as "the level of maturity a child must reach before he can succeed in formal reading under normal instruction. A chronological age of six years and a minimum IQ of 100 is usually implied, with normal health, hearing, vision, etc. (Schubert 1972).

Readiness for reading depends upon both nature and nurture, maturity, and training (Leeper, 1974). It appears that some three year olds can learn to read as well as and as rapidly as do five or six year olds (Pines, 1963). Factors reportedly involved in early reading include superior mental ability, a rich experiential background, good language development, adequate vision, and hearing, eye-hand coordination, age and good general health.

Elkind believes that there are four requirements for successful beginning reading:

(1) a language-rich environment, (2) attachment to adults who model and reward reading behavior, (3) attainment of concrete operations, and (4) an instructional program.

According to Havinghurst (1972), a child is ready to read when he has acquired a level of form perception and a vocabulary that can be learned prior to age six.

The time for beginning reading depends upon both the child's capacities and interest and the type of reading instruction available. More time needs to be spent considering "how to begin" rather than arguing about when the instruction should begin (Durkin, 1970).

Smart and Smart (1977), believe that brain maturation underlies the perceptual learning necessary for reading. Because success in school depends so heavily on reading, naive parents, and sometimes teachers, assume that the earlier formal instruction is begun, the better. The foundation for reading is the task of the preschool years through development in language, graphic arts, visual and auditory perception, attention, curiosity, motor skills, and esthetic appreciation of books and stories.

According to Leeper (1974), a child is ready for reading when his capacities are mature or adequate in relation to the requirements of a specific learning situation, in this instance, learning to read.

The generally accepted requirements for reading are:

1) MENTAL AGE. Many still believe that a child must attain a given mental age, usually six and a half, before being ready to read.

2) VISUAL MATURITY. Some contend that at age five, children's eyes are not adequately developed physically for reading instruction.

3) LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT. Most often this point is interpreted as a need for additional vocabulary development prior to reading instruction.

4) EXPERIENCES. Children must have a variety of experiences in order to have established images for the items about which they will need.

5) MOTIVATION. The child must want to read before instruction in reading can begin successfully.

6) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. At age five, children need to develop socially before being introduced into any formal activity such as reading.

7) VISUAL DISCRIMINATION. The child has traditionally been taught to see gross differences in shapes and geometric forms. The child really needs to notice fine differences that distinguish one letter from another.

8) AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION. This has traditionally been interpreted to mean that a child must be taught to hear differences in sounds before being exposed to reading instruction.

Let's examine each of the above in terms of the evidence that exists.

Mental Age

The claim that a given mental age is necessary for beginning reading is based on a report by Morphett and Washburne from a study they did in 1928 in Winnetka, Illinois (Hillerich, 1977). Hillerich questions the design of the study and claims that children and teachers are different today than they were in 1928, and so are teaching methods and materials.

Studies done by Durkin and Anderson found no correlation between mental age and reading achievement (1962).

In Durkin's later study of 40 children, four and five years old, from various socio-economic backgrounds, the highest mental age was 5. At the end of the year, 82 percent of the children knew an average of 125.4 words, the entire alphabet, and 70 percent of the letter sounds. Chronological age was not one of the factors affecting achievement (Durkin, 1974-75).

Durkin suggests that an early start in reading may be even more important for the less bright child since it gave him more time to learn the necessary skills (1966).

Early readers in Durkin's study came from homes where parents and other siblings answered the child's questions about words and offered encouragement (Durkin, 1966).

Anderson (1960), also reports that four year olds of varying mental ability profit from early formal reading instruction.

Tinker (1972), notes that several studies have found that the age at which reading can be taught depends upon the methods and materials used.

The prominence of Washburne and the influence of Arnold Gesell, who placed heredity and maturation over learning and practice, explains the widespread acceptance of the above definition of reading readiness (Wilson 1976). It was convenient to explain reading failure as the child's not reaching the proper stage of development. In this instance, the teacher, the curriculum, and the school simply sit back and wait for the child to mature. No self-examination of teaching style, method or materials was called for. Everybody was safe.

The maturational view of Gesell and others has come under attack by the cognitive psychologists of today. Hunt, Bruner, Bloom and Piaget have all focused on early childhood as a time of rapid intellectual development. Bruner insists that a small child's

ability to learn has long been underestimated. According to Bruner: "Any subject can be taught effectively, in some intellectually honest way, to any child at any stage of development."

Intelligence, rather than being fixed by genetic factors at birth, emerges as it is nurtured. Each stage of development carries with it possibilities for the acquisition of new abilities, new ways of processing information. Unless each of these abilities is sufficiently exercised as it emerges, it will not develop fully and it will contribute little, if at all, to the demands of the next stage (Almy, 1964).

A child is ready for reading when his capacities are mature or adequate in relation to the requirements of a specific learning situation, in this instance, learning to read (Leeper, 1974).

Visit a preschool where early reading is a part of the curriculum. Record the mental age of the children who are reading. How many have achieved the 6.5 M.A.? How many have not? Write a short paragraph about your findings.

Visual Maturity

Hillerich (1977), claims that there is no evidence that exposure to print at any age can be harmful to a child's eyes. According to Hillerich, most normal children can focus and accommodate visually by twelve months of age.

Both Durkin and the Denver researchers observed no visual or psychological problems due to their early start in reading. Instead, they found that earlier starts in reading led to satisfactory accomplishments.

Doman (1964), states that very young children, even the brain damaged children that he works with, can learn to read if the print is made very big. According to Doman, very young children want to learn; can learn; should learn; and, in fact, are learning to read. Furthermore, Doman feels that the stimulation of learning to read is very beneficial to the brain.

Read, "How To Teach Your Baby To Read" by Glenn Doman, pp. 1-84.

Write a short paper reacting to Doman's premise that early reading stimulates neurological organization.

Language Development

Most early childhood professionals would agree that there is always room for further language development. However, certain developmental activities in language must be accomplished prior to reading. These activities include expressive language, vocabulary development, auditory discrimination, the production of sounds, and the use of language patterns. Most four and five year olds who have a rich language environment and who have been read to at home will have mastered these language skills.

According to Ylisto (1976), a young child proceeds through the process of learning to read as naturally as he learns to talk and understand language, and as personally and creatively as his curiosity and exploratory behavior present possibilities. Reading is a natural outgrowth of language development.

View the sound filmstrip: HQ 774.F5, "Language Development" in the Learning Resource Center.

After viewing the filmstrip, prepare a chart showing the sequential steps involved in language development from birth to age six. At each plateau in development list experiences or activities the child should have to develop his greatest potential.

Experiences

Obviously comprehension cannot occur if the children have no first hand experience with the content of early reading materials. There are two solutions to this problem. First, teachers (you), in early childhood must provide children with as many experiences as possible. And secondly, teachers can prepare their own reading materials out of the existing experiential background of the child. Sylvia Ashton Warner provided a classic example of what she called, "Organic Reading," made out of the stuff of the child, for teachers in early childhood to model when she taught five year old Maori children to read by using an organic vocabulary. The organic vocabulary is taken from the dynamic life of the child. As such, these first words must have intense meaning to the child; already a part of the child's life and made of the stuff of the child himself. From this key vocabulary, the child writes his first book. Using this technique, Warner taps the creative energies of the child and enables the child to develop the instinctive love of reading every child is capable of, if exposed, during the formative years.

The language experience approach to reading discussed by Fisher and Terry (1977), talks about using experience stories created by the children themselves as a vehicle for the teaching of reading. This approach guarantees content that is meaningful to the children and an exercise that is active rather than passive.

Symbolic representation is a central core of cognitive development in Piagets' theory. Symbolic understanding is the basis of the reading process and of reading comprehension. Although a child in the sensori-motor stage begins to have crude mental images, the pre-operational child, approximately 2-7 years of age, is the time a child begins to think and solve problems by means of mental representations. Reading at this level would

emphasize interaction with concrete materials and experiences as well as experiences with pictorial and symbolic representations of reality. For example, in order to read the word apple, the child should first experience a real apple; he needs to see a picture of an apple as well as a dramatic impression or modeling of an apple. Through these added experiences, the abstract level (e.g., word symbol "apple"), begins to have meaning as the child reads the word (Jemao, 1976).

Read, "The Teacher" by Sylvia Ashton Warner. Copies are on reserve in the Learning Resource Center.

After reading "The Teacher", visit one of the area preschools and record 50 of the words the children most commonly use.

After compiling the fifty word list, prepare two reading stories for preschool children that Sylvia Ashton Warner would consider organic. Use what you have learned about the young child's visual maturity when you plan the size of the print for your story.

Prepare a list of ten prereading experiences that you, the teacher, can provide for the children, that will give them more background for understanding what they read.

Motivation

The prestige of being able to read and the typical preschooler's fascination with the idea of words in print all indicate that the child is motivated to read if only we will take advantage of that motivation. To capitalize on that motivation and keep it active means to provide experiences that are successful. There is no better motivation for achievement than success.

According to Hymes, (1968), reading is a skill that brings young children one area of delicacy in their life; mastery, power, control. Once a child has this mastery, he becomes an extra lucky child. The world of the far away and the gone-by is opened to him. He is no longer tied to the world of his own experience. Such an attractive, appealing "product" requires no hard sell.

Nor is there any argument at all against helping young children move toward this fabulous power, helping each one of them move as fast as he can comfortably go. Youngsters will want to leave their illiteracy behind just as they want to leave their dependency behind. But each child must set his own pace (Hymes, 1968).

If, as Piaget postulates, the child is intrinsically motivated by the ability to do and to achieve, then he will be motivated by his success and pleasure in reading and read more and more. (Demao, 1976).

Wilson, (1976), reports on a study by Appleton that shows that kindergarten children, when given a choice, chose to take part in a reading program and they all succeeded in learning to read. Unfortunately many kindergartners are often discouraged from early reading merely by the absence of writing supplies and easy books.

Visit an area preschool where early reading is taught. Observe the children during their reading lesson. During free play ask the children if they would like to read one of their stories to you. Write a short paragraph describing the children's attitude toward reading. Do you feel the children you observed were motivated to read?

Social Development

Most early childhood educators feel that the primary task of early childhood programs is socialization. Obviously very young children need many social experiences, however, there is no evidence that children can only develop socially in free play situations. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that a skill-oriented activity will not provide as much social development as playing in the sandbox.

Visit a nursery school and a structured, cognitively oriented, preschool and compare the ability of children to wait their turn, (a social skill). Comment on any other aspects of socialization that you observe such as: sharing, co-operative play, friendship, or consideration for others.

Visual Discrimination

Visual discrimination usually involves teaching children to see differences in pictures or geometric forms. Hillerich, (1977), claims that this has nothing to do with reading and is really an insult to a child who can already distinguish his own black cocker spaniel from that of a neighbor when the two dogs are playing down the street. Hillerich recommends practice in letter form discrimination, calling to his attention their ideosyncrocies, if the child is to be successful in reading.

According to Havinghurst, (1972), there is some research evidence that the human eye and brain apparatus has a special sensitivity for registering visual perceptions from birth to the age of six or eight. It appears that perceptions of forms improves with practice in the years of infancy, and therefore, that experience in observing visual forms such as the symbols of language causes the nervous system to develop in this respect.

Thus, the biological factor in reading may develop and improve if the infant or young child is stimulated by the environment.

View the filmstrip: QP491.V57, "Visual Perception Skills" in the Learning Resource Center.

Read, "How to Raise a Brighter Child," by Joan Beck, pgs. 163-206. Compare what Ms. Beck is saying with the information given in the filmstrip.

Auditory Discrimination

Once again, most preschool age children have developed skills on their own that require finer discrimination than the activities they are asked to perform in the name of reading readiness in most nursery schools. Any child who speaks his native language must hear differences of sounds in words or he could not have learned to speak the language.

View the filmstrip: LB1573.B4, "Beginning to Read" in the Learning Resource Center.

Read Hillerich (1977), pgs. 55-72.

Compare the view taken in the filmstrip with that of Hillerich in "Reading Fundamentals for Preschool and Primary Children."

SHOULD PRESCHOOLERS READ

The question is not whether children can learn to read at an early age. Of course they can learn to read. There is plenty of evidence, according to Smith, (1964), that young children can learn to read; the question is whether they should be taught to read at an early age.

Hymes, (1968), tells us that children under six must use their minds, and they want to. They must learn, and they want to. The challenge is to find the content and the methods of teaching that fit the young child. Then his mind will really stretch. Our concern has to be to develop a love of learning. Because of the knowledge children will have to continue learning, on their own, all their lives.

Passive programs are almost as hurtful as pushy ones. Passive programs are monuments to missed teaching opportunities.

Good kindergartens teach reading to their children, as much as they are ready for. They teach reading in lively, functional ways that their five year olds are ready for. They stay away from the made up readiness gimmicks.

According to Weber, (1971), there has never been an objection to early reading or number work in the British Infant school, provided it arises naturally from a child's interests and is not forced.

Words, signs for interest centers and experience stories are abundant and might have started some children reading. Teachers gather small groups of children deemed ready for writing and reading activities, but they readily accept the fact of some children not joining. British Infant schools teach phonetics. They do an inordinate amount of writing as compared to our Early Childhood programs. Weber, (1971), feels that some of the children learned reading by writing. Startled by the amount of writing so early, Weber, (1971) interpreted it as pressure at first until upon further observation, it became apparent that the children were motivated to read and write through the needs of the school.

The five year research project conducted cooperatively by the Denver Public Schools and the Colorado State Department of Education focusing on the effectiveness of beginning

reading instruction in kindergarten showed that beginning reading skills could be taught quite effectively to large numbers of typical kindergarten pupils. The permanence of the gains made by the children depended upon subsequent instruction. A very significant finding of the study showed that early reading presents no blocks, physical or emotional, to later reading.

Most advocates of early reading are advocates because they share two basic beliefs. First, they believe that children will master reading with joy and ease during the period of life when language develops. Reading is written language. No more and no less an abstraction than the spoken word. When children are able to comprehend the word cookie when the real cookie is not present they are able to comprehend the printed symbols and attach the same meaning to it. What's more, they feel the brain demonstrates an unusual sensitivity for these language tasks and can master them more fully now than they will ever be able to at a later time. Secondly, they feel that reading is the key to future learning. Reading makes the child a free and independent learner. Once the child can read, he can control his own exposure to science, nature, study, math, social studies, and so on. He can enjoy his story books more fully, and develop his own interests beyond that of the non-reader.

View the filmstrip: LB1142.03 E6, "Reading in the Kindergarten," in the Learning Resource Center.

Write a short paper describing the program and how you might change it.

Defend the changes, additions or deletions, to the program.

THE METHOD

The preceding search of the literature clearly shows that the evidence does support a case for early reading exposure. Durkin's research and the Denver study provide the most extensive evidence of the success of early training in reading.

The next question is how can reading be taught most effectively to very young children?

Durkin's (1974-75), language arts experiment with four and five year olds stressed a curriculum based on how preschoolers learned to read naturally at home. It had five primary characteristics: (1) equal attention to writing, (2) the use of vocabulary meaningful to the child and relevant to his environment, (3) the whole-word approach, (4) a focus on letters and numerals in the child's environment, (5) reading to and talking with the child every day.

The children in Durkin's studies learned to read in very informal, unstructured ways. They participated in activities that were meaningful to them such as: learning to recognize and write some common words by sight which are in the child's environment, and dictating and reading back language-experience stories.

Miller, (1977), suggests that beginning reading skills should be taught in sessions that are informal, brief, to accommodate their short attention spans, and very interesting.

Lay, (1977), like Sylvia Ashton Warner, (1963), believes that children are likely to respond with greater interest to words that have some personal significance.

Doman (1964), stressed the size, very large, of the print and large spacing between sentences.

Montessori, (1950) and Doman, (1964), advocated reading the names of known objects first.

Hillerich (1977), and Montessori, (1950), stressed phonics while Warner, (1963), and Doman (1964), began with sight words.

Beadle, (1971), claims that most children learn to read regardless of the approach.

The criteria of an early reading program that do not appear to be in dispute are:

- 1) Brief sessions
- 2) Informal lessons
- 3) Large print and well spaced sentences
- 4) Whole word approach
- 5) Organic vocabulary relevant to the child
- 6) A combination of phonics and sight words
- 7) Concrete experiences where necessary to make vocabulary meaningful
- 8) Equal attention to writing
- 9) Reading to and talking with children every day
- 10) Language experience stories

Based upon the new knowledge you have acquired, plan an early reading program that would take into account the above criteria.

Pre-Assessment Scoring Key

1) List three objections some professionals have against early reading for preschoolers.

Answer: (Any three are acceptable).

- a) Children are immature physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- b) Premature reading will cause permanent antagonism or distaste for reading.
- c) Causes visual damage.
- d) Robs children of their childhood.
- e) Nursery school teachers don't have the materials or techniques necessary to teach early reading.
- f) Other skills and concepts are more important.

2) List three reasons some professionals give in support of early reading for preschoolers.

Answer: (Any three are acceptable).

- a) The Denver and Durkin studies show that no harm comes from early reading and higher levels of reading achievement through grade five was evident when the instruction was adjusted to their needs.
- b) An earlier start in reading stimulates brain development.
- c) Children want to learn to read.
- d) Reading is a natural outgrowth of the language development that takes place in the early years.
- e) Children will love to read if exposed early enough.
- f) The early years are the best years to learn to read.

3) List three early reading activities suitable for preschoolers.

Answer: (Any three are acceptable).

- a) Phonics games, i.e. identifying beginning sounds
- b) Discriminating letter forms
- c) Recalling sequence of events
- d) Arranging in sequence
- e) Building basic vocabulary
- f) Listening comprehension
- g) Ability to use oral context
- h) Ability to follow oral directions
- 4) Why would you include early reading in your preschool curriculum?

Answer:

I would include early reading in my preschool curriculum because many preschoolers can and want to learn to read. And because holding a child back who is ready is as harmful as pushing a child who is not ready.

NOTE: Any answer incorporating one or more of the reasons professionals give in support of early reading is acceptable.

Post-Assessment Scoring Key

- 1) List three key reasons, cited in the literature, against early reading.

Answer: (any three are acceptable).

- a) Children are immature physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- b) Premature reading will cause permanent antagonism or distaste for reading.
- c) Causes visual damage.
- d) Robs children of their childhood.

- e) Nursery school teachers don't have the materials or techniques necessary to teach early reading.
- f) Other skills and concepts are more important.

Are these reasons supported by research?

Answer: No.

- 2) List three key reasons cited in the literature, for early reading.

Answer: (any three are acceptable).

- a) The Denver and Durkin studies show that no harm comes from early reading and higher levels of reading achievement through grade five was evident when the instruction was adjusted to their needs.
- b) An earlier start in reading stimulates brain development.
- c) Children want to learn to read.
- d) Reading is a natural outgrowth of the language development that takes place in the early years.
- e) Children will love reading if exposed early enough.
- f) The early years are the best years to learn to read.

Are these reasons supported by research?

Answer: Yes, the Denver and Durkin studies support these reasons.

- 3) What criteria must the preschool teacher keep in mind as she plans the early reading program?

Answer:

- a) Child's short attention span.
- b) Vocabulary relevant to the children.

- c) Size and spacing of print.
 - d) Concrete experiences where necessary to make vocabulary meaningful.
 - e) Informal lessons.
 - f) Whole word approach.
 - g) Equal attention to writing.
 - h) Reading to and talking with the child every day.
 - i) Language experience stories.
 - j) A combination of phonics and sight words.
- 4) List four activities that you would consider basic to a preschool reading program.

Answer: (any four are acceptable).

- a) Reading to the children each day.
- b) Talking with the children each day.
- c) Concrete experiences.
- d) Visual and auditory discrimination activities.
- e) Writing activities.
- f) Language experience stories.

REVISION

The instructor is interested in improving this unit based on your answers to the following questions.

1) Do you feel the material dealt with in this unit is relevant to your present or future needs?

YES _____ NO _____

2) How much did you enjoy working through this unit?

_____ very much _____ some _____ very little _____ once

3) Which statement best describes your feelings about your involvement with this self-instructional unit?

_____ too easy

_____ boring

_____ inspiring

_____ can take it or leave it

_____ a waste of time

_____ a real treat

_____ interesting

_____ dull

_____ OK

_____ too time consuming

_____ just another course requirement

_____ did it to please the instructor

_____ sure beats lecture

Other comments or suggestions.

The fifth task was to administer the unit to two students. Student A finished the unit in three weeks while student B finished the unit in four days.

The final task was to recommend revisions of the unit based on an interview with the students and the questionnaire the students filled out at the end of the unit. Both students felt that the material in the unit was relevant to their future needs and both claimed they enjoyed working through the unit very much. The statement that best describes student A's feelings about the unit was, "a real treat", while student B felt that it was, "inspiring." Neither student had any additional comments to make on the questionnaire. During the interview student B would change nothing in the unit. Student A, however, felt that all the visits to preschools was a hardship for married students and would have preferred less of these.

At this point, nothing was done on the unit because the exposure to nursery and preschool settings is considered paramount for students who are majors in Early Childhood Education.

If a suggestion such as this were acted upon, the hands on experience with children so highly recommended by the State of Illinois guidelines for vocational programs would be eliminated.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The real advantage to this self-instructional unit is the control it gives to the students over their own learning. They can pace themselves according to their own individual learning ability and personal life style. They have no deadlines to meet except the ones they established for themselves.

Another advantage is the flexibility it gives students. Students such as those with full time jobs or traveling jobs; students who experience illness or accidents in the middle of a semester; students who are impatient with the traditional pace of the classroom, are now able to earn college credit and ultimately a degree using the self-instructional unit as a vehicle.

The first recommendation is to incorporate self-instructional units into every course in the Child Care program at Moraine Valley so that students who do experience health or personal problems in the middle of a semester can complete the course requirements if they choose.

The second recommendation is to offer the units to the Non-Traditional Learning subdivision Dean for those students, who for a variety of reasons find it impossible to attend classes in the traditional classroom setting.

The third recommendation is to share the results of this practicum with other professionals in the field at the Child Care Conference scheduled in March at M.V.C.C. and to submit the practicum to E.R.I.C. so that other educators interested in either early reading or self-instructional units can benefit from this practicum.

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